

“DIFFICULT DAYS TO FACE”
Psalm 64:1-10, Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Timothy 3:1-9
March 26 & 27, 2022

“A woman hurried to the pharmacy to pick up the medication she needed for her husband. When she got back to the car, she found her keys locked inside.

“The woman found an old rusty coat hanger on the ground. She looked at it and said, ‘I don’t know how to use this to open a car door.’ So she bowed her head and asked God to send her some help.

“Within five minutes an old motorcycle pulled up, driven by a bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag. He got off his cycle and asked if he could help.

“She said, ‘Yes, my husband is sick. I’ve locked my keys in my car. I must get home. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?’

“He said, ‘Sure.’ He walked over to the car with the coat hanger, and in less than a minute the car was opened.

“She hugged the man and through tears said, ‘Thank you, God, for sending me such a very nice man.’

“The man heard her little prayer and replied, ‘Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison yesterday; I was in prison for car theft.’

“The woman hugged the man again, sobbing, ‘Oh, thank you, God! You even sent me a professional!’”¹ When God sends help, don’t ask questions - just trust that God has sent the right person to help you with what you need.

This story sounds a lot like our lesson of Psalm 64. **David cried out to God for help, laying all of his troubles before the Lord in prayer.** His list of “enemies” sounds like much of what we can expect today - wicked people plotting against us; mobs of evil people; malicious talkers ready to cut our throats with their words; slanderers spreading lies; criminals planning perfect crimes against us. It doesn’t take us long to see we are in the same condition that King David was in when he called out to

¹ (Email: Laughing Matters, *When God Sends Help, Don’t Ask Questions*, January 11, 2022, sent by Chuck Stelzner)

God for help. **But when we are faced with difficult days, do we call out to God for help?**

Many times I see or hear people grouching or complaining about what's going on, but I don't see or hear much praying going on, seeking the Lord's help for those problems we are facing. We seem to want to figure things out on our own, or just muddle through with the hope of finding an acceptable resolution, or getting angry because there is nothing else we can do. **So many in our world today put God as their last priority when they face difficulties and hardships.** They only use prayer as a last resort. But folks, prayer really needs to be our first line of defense.

Look at David's response to his list of "enemies." He starts with the two most important words in verse 7, "*But God...*" You see, when we give God the trials and troubles on our hearts, He hears us and works for us to rescue us from the evil that surrounds us. But unless we go to Him in prayer, unless we turn to Him and let Him handle all our troubles and trials, we're on our own. **When we turn to the Lord God Almighty for our first line of defense, He responds at just the right time,** "*[shooting] His arrows at them, and suddenly they are wounded. He will destroy them because of those words; all who see them will shake their heads. They will all be afraid; they will think about what God has done and tell about His deeds. All righteous people will rejoice because of what the Lord has done. They will find safety in Him; all people will praise Him*" (Ps. 64:7-10).

We find David's situation in our lives all around us. Men and women in positions of power seek to set guidelines that will destroy us - *But God*. People will make plans to exploit us or malign us - *But God*. Officials will try to make laws that take away our freedoms - *But God*. Lawyers will strive to twist the law to get what they want - *But God*. Leaders will wage wars upon us and try to take us captive - *But God*. Politicians will work desperately to try to keep a death culture through abortion - *But God*. Thieves and robbers will try to take all our hard earned possessions - *But God*. Bosses will try to manipulate us and force us to go against our consciences - *But God*. Businesses will try to force us to support their wicked ambitions - *But God*. Even church officials will try to take advantage of us and force us to conform to their ideology - *But God*. And sadly, our spouses may turn against us and

disrespect us and decide to leave us - *But* God. Do you see a pattern here? Whenever we are faced with the difficulties of the world, **when we turn to the Lord our God for His help, He steps in and brings a resolution**. But we need to turn to Him first, not wait until everything else falls apart. God invites us to call out to Him in prayer so that He might step in and rescue us. God is still the Almighty power of the universe, so He is the One we need to turn to for help in times of need. We need the confidence that our Great Lord God Almighty can and will come to our aid to nurture us and support us and guide us to “green pastures and still waters” (Ps. 23:2) so that we might find His rest and peace.

You see, when we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we become the enemy of Satan and he puts a great big target on us. Then he does his very best to destroy us with his arsenal of wickedness and evil. When we become a child of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we become an enemy of the world, and the world will turn against us.

Yet, **God has supplied us with His armor so that we might be able to endure the attacks of the Devil in these difficult days**. God has provided a way for us to protect ourselves as well as continue to advance against evil and wickedness. The Apostle Paul lays out our armor in Ephesians 6.

Paul reminds us that this is not a battle “*against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age*” (Eph. 6:12). We can easily miss this and think that our enemies are other people who wield authority on this earth. But it is not another human we need worry about, but the evil forces that they have allowed to guide and direct them into attacking us. Satan has great power here on this earth, but He is not the Ultimate power of the universe. That only belongs to God, so we are challenged to “*put on God’s armor now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy’s attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground*” (Eph. 6:13).

Without God’s armor to protect us, we have very little, if any, power to protect ourselves, much less defend ourselves. On our own we are no match to the powers of Satan and his legion of devils and demons. Without God’s protection we are sitting ducks just waiting to be shot at.

So God offers us His war clothing to protect us from the devices and schemes of the Devil. He starts out by giving us the Belt of Truth. The Belt is an important article of clothing because it holds all the other armor together. Just like belts holding up our pants that allow us to move around without any hindrances, the Belt of Truth also allows us to attach other items of weaponry for our use. If you take a look at a police officer's belt, you will see a variety of equipment that is dispatched to them for their protection and apprehension of those working against the law.

The Belt of Truth gives us the solid foundation upon which to base our lives. When we have the truth of God's Word in our lives, we are able to clearly distinguish good from evil, and we can recognize the games that Satan plays against us to try to deceive us and distract us. The Belt of Truth gives us clear guidelines of what God expects and demands of us. With this Belt of Truth tightly fashioned around our waist we are able to maneuver quickly and efficiently for God's purpose, and attach our own weapons on it to stand strong against any attack.

Then we have the Breastplate of Righteousness. This is likened to a Kevlar bullet-proof vest that protects our heart and vital organs from the piercing of deadly spears or sharp swords or fiery arrows being used against us. This is the essential protection for the core of our bodies.

The Breastplate of Righteousness protects the heart from disappointment or discouragement or depression caused by the thrust of anger or aggression against us. Righteousness guides our lives to always do what is good and right, no matter how fierce the battle may become. Righteousness extinguishes the blazing arrows shot against us by exposing the evil intentions of those who would seek our demise and destruction. This Breastplate of Righteousness guards us from the lies and wicked intentions of the enemy, keeping us set upon following God's Will and God's Ways, no matter if it comes at us head on, or attempting to blind-side us from behind. This Breastplate of Righteousness provides us protection in the front and in the back.

Then, God supplies us with the essentials for moving around in enemy territory. Without protection for our feet, we would quickly become immobilized and surrounded by the destroyers. So

God provides us with the Shoes of Readiness - the Gospel of peace. Now, these aren't flip-flops mind you. They are the boots of a warrior that not only protect the feet, but the legs up to the knees. If you can't move in battle, the enemy quickly fixes in on your location and releases a payload of malicious artillery against you. Movement is essential not only for retreat or evasion, but also for advancement against the enemy. **So the Shoes of Readiness protect our feet and lower legs from mind fields of abuse and treachery.**

The Gospel provides us with the Good News of God that tells us that He has already won the war, but that we must maintain the battle so that the enemy is defeated. We must continue to strive against any advance by the forces of evil, and be ready at any time to move out to achieve God's goals, reaching others for the Salvation of Jesus. Through the Gospel we have the hope that though the way is difficult, often laid with booby-traps and deceitful snares, the Gospel of peace protects us so that we might continue our journey of faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then God provides us with the Shield of Faith as a moveable defense that encircles us with protection. The Shield is built to absorb the brutal and often crushing blows of the hammer of hatred and mace of animosity. It is worn on the arm of the warrior so that it can move in front and behind, to the left or the right or above the soldier of Christ so as to protect from attack at any angle. And this Shield of Faith also enables us to advance upon our enemies of evil because we can use this Shield as a weapon, too, bursting through strongholds and breaking lines of deceit and deception.

The last defensive piece of God's armor is the Helmet of Salvation. Our head is the control center of our lives, so if anything happens to our heads, we're readily taken out of commission.

Protection of the mind is vital to staying true to God's Word and without this protection of the Helmet of Salvation, our minds are constantly invaded by media messages, and images, and sounds that can completely neutralize our ability to focus on our action plan from the Lord.

When you look at the helmet of a soldier in today's army you find many items attached to it that protects the soldier. Often the helmet has a face shield that helps keep dust and shrapnel out of the face

of the warrior. This shield protects the eyes from danger as well as giving vital information to the soldier. There are “heads-up-display” screens that relay vital information as to location and distance from the enemy, giving the soldier appropriate data for him to evade confrontation or to engage in battle.

The helmet also has night-vision goggles that enables the soldier to see in the darkest of night. For us, God’s Word exposes all of the lies and traps laid out by the evil enemy, enabling us to see through the darkness to maneuver through the dangers set before us and reach our goals.

And the helmet also has communication equipment that keep the soldier in contact with the commanding officer and the rest of the team. This allows the warrior to stay tuned to announcements of enemy movements as well as their own army’s movements. Without communication with the commanding officer and the rest of the team, the soldier can quickly find himself isolated from the support he needs in order to keep fighting the good fight. Communication is essential for our own lives, guiding us in the righteous paths of the Lord. God’s paths will never lead us to destruction, but will always bring us safely home.

Without the Helmet of Salvation, our lives are open to a variety of the enemy’s weapons, again seeking our total annihilation. **We must wear the Helmet of Salvation in order to remain effective for the Lord.**

But God does not leave us without the ability to attack and drive off the enemies of darkness. God has given us the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This weapon not only blocks the advances and lunges and blows the enemy intends to give to us, but the Sword of the Spirit enables us to return the fight to the enemy. **This Sword is a double edged sword that “*penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)*.”** It is alive and active and provides the soldier of Christ the means to render his attackers a crushing blow in righteousness and truth.

Imagine a soldier without the ability to attack and dispose of the enemy against him. He is useless without a weapon to use that can not only prevent attack against him but help him to achieve his

goals. Without our weapon of the Word of God in our lives, we not only lose a way to protect ourselves, but a way to remove the enemy from our own lives. **The Word of God as our Sword of the Spirit guides us and directs us to remain in the army of the Lord Jesus** and gives us the ability to accomplish His mission of bringing Salvation to the whole world.

And think of a soldier who has all of this equipment available to him, but he doesn't know how it works or how to wear it. We have all of God's armor available to us right now, but unless we put it on and wear this protective equipment every day, we are vulnerable to whatever attack the enemy puts before us. There are some who look at me when I tell them about the armor of God and they say, "What do I need that for? I don't have an enemy attacking me. I don't have any worry about an enemy at my door."

Friends, we are in the battle for our very lives, surrounded by the schemes and plans of the enemy working diligently to deceive us into thinking that everything is safe and secure, while at the same time planning to destroy us. Again, we're not talking about people here, but the spiritual warfare that is going on right before us every minute of the day. If we are unable to see it and comprehend its danger, we are already prisoners of war, confined in the death camps of the enemy, surrounded by the fences of illegitimate media and confined by the razor wire of political deception.

Listen to Paul's warning to us in 2 Timothy 3:1-9. (READ 2 Timothy 3:1-9).

We are living in these difficult days that some are calling the precursor to the end times. **Every one of these people that Paul warns us about are active right before our eyes.** Good is becoming evil in the minds of many, and evil is becoming good. What once was practiced as common in our society is being vilified and condemned. Those who work hard and plan for the future are being called greedy and privileged. Laws that once governed us toward security and peace are being called racist and unjust. Mandates are being enforced against us, trying to limit our freedom, bringing us into complete control of whoever is in leadership positions. We're surrounded by lies and misinformation that has already set in motion the destruction of many. Even the Church is following along, teaching

and promoting things that are completely contrary to the Word of God. **How are we to endure these difficult days?** How are we to protect us from those who wish to destroy us?

Friends, we have Salvation in Jesus Christ our Lord. He told us that we could expect disagreement and hated and oppression when we proclaim Him as our Savior and Lord. Jesus warned us that our lives would not be easy, not to discourage us from following Him, but rather to prepare us for the battles we must face so that we might stand strong as witnesses for Him.

In the midst of the war in Ukraine, you would not believe the number of people turning to the Lord for their help. As David called out to God for help in Psalm 64, they are calling out to the Lord and He is answering them, bringing them the peace of His Salvation. The Christian church is growing rapidly in China, even as the leaders and authorities are desperately trying to outlaw Christianity from any venue or media source. The Christian Church is growing in war-torn Myanmar, with indigenous pastors sharing the Light of Jesus Christ with the people. Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus throughout Africa as men and women realize the value of having Christ Jesus as Lord of their lives.

The people of the whole world are crying out for life, and they are turning to Jesus Christ because He is the only one who can provide peace and hope and love and joy and life. In the face of oppression and death they are holding on to Jesus because they know that He will never leave them nor forsake them, and when this life is finished, there is a place in the Father's house waiting for them.

These are difficult days for us to be living in, but they are tremendously marvelous days in which the whole world is turning to faith in Jesus Christ. **So don your armor given to us by God, suit up for the battle that is already raging against us,** and work diligently to release the captives, giving sight to the blind, and giving hope to the hopeless. Their lives and their very souls depend upon it.

Father, in these dark days, we call out to You to guide us and strengthen us to fulfill Your mission of reaching the whole world for Jesus Christ. Help us to put on the full armor of God so that we might be effective soldiers of Christ Jesus. Give us the courage to live for You every day of our lives, no matter what comes our way. This we pray in Jesus' powerful and holy Name. AMEN.